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SUBJECT: BIGGEST DRUG BUST IN ICELAND'S HISTORY REVEALS
COORDINATION ACROSS AGENCIES

11. (U) Summary: Around midnight on Saturday, April 18, police arrested three men near the harbor town of Hofn in southeast Iceland on suspicion of smuggling more than 109 kg (240 pounds) of amphetamines, MDMA (ecstasy), hashish, and marijuana into Iceland by boat. The men had allegedly picked up the drugs from a sailboat off the southeast coast, packed the drugs into vehicles and were driving towards Reykjavik when they were arrested. The heist was remarkable for the joint coordination efforts. Over 100 people participated in the police operations including members of the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police; police departments in Eastern Iceland; the National Police Commissioner; the Icelandic Coast Guard; the Danish military; and the Icelandic Defense Agency. Post is encouraged by these efforts and hopes the coordination can continue regardless of rumored difficulties with budget cuts. End Summary.

12. (U) On April 18-19, Icelandic police and Coast Guard officers coordinated in the largest narcotics seizure in the country's history. The operation resulted from ongoing investigations and liaison with other European police units, combined with a tip from a vigilant fishing vessel crew. Stefan Eiriksson, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, told a press conference that the investigations conducted by the Icelandic Coast Guard and the Metropolitan Police had been ongoing for some time. However, they acted quickly when an Icelandic fishing vessel notified the police authorities of the movements of a suspicious sailboat heading towards the coast of Iceland. The Icelandic media reported that on April 18, three men piloted a rented inflatable boat with an outboard motor from Djupivogur, a small town on the east coast of Iceland, to pick up 240 pounds of drugs from a rented Belgian sailboat south east of the Icelandic coast. The men returned with the drugs to Djupivogur, loaded them into a vehicle and headed to Reykjavik. Later that night police stopped the car near Hofn and arrested the three men.

13. (U) At the same time, the Icelandic Coast Guard (ICG) started pursuing the sailboat by sea. On April 19, the ICG's fixed wing aircraft also joined in the search, and the aircraft located the sailboat midway between Iceland and the Faroe Islands. The crew established radio contact with the sailboat but the men aboard disregarded orders to stop. While the ICG aircraft returned to Iceland to refuel, a Danish military Challenger CL604 airplane replaced it, keeping up the pursuit. Finally, late on the 19th, the ICG ship caught up with the sailboat 74 nautical miles (85 miles) northwest of the Faroe Islands. Four members of the Special Unit of the National Police Commissioner (the Viking Squad), who had been transported aboard the ICG vessel earlier in a helicopter, boarded the sailboat and arrested three men, two Icelanders and a Dutchman.

The ICG vessel and the sailboat returned to Iceland on April 21.

14. (U) Over 100 people participated in the operation, including: members of the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police; police departments in Eastern Iceland; the National Police Commissioner; the Icelandic Coast Guard; and the Danish military, which provided a Challenger CL604 aircraft to provide air surveillance relieving the ICG's aircraft during refueling. The Danish contribution was coordinated through the Iceland Defense Agency after the ICG asked for help in finding available NATO assets. Fridrik Jonsson, of the Defense Agency told EmbOff, "From the time the Coast Guard contacted us, the process of contacting and coordinating with both NATO's Combined Air Operations Center in Funderup, Denmark, and the air forces of neighboring allies was relatively straight forward."

15. (U) About half of the 240 pounds of drugs confiscated consisted of white materials (cocaine, amphetamines etc.) and the other half of hashish, marijuana, and a couple of thousand MDMA (ecstasy) tablets. As the proportions of the various drugs have not been disclosed exactly, street value cannot be verified but it is clear that it amounts to millions of dollars, making this the biggest drug bust in Icelandic history. This case is reminiscent of the 2007 Pole Star case where the Icelandic police authorities raided the sailboat Pole Star where it was stationed at the Faskrudsfjordur (a small town on the east coast of Iceland) harbor and confiscated 90 pounds of drugs. In that case, one defendant was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison, two others received a seven-year sentence, and a fourth defendant was sentenced to five years. Other defendants received lighter sentences. Also of note is the inclusion of marijuana in the seized shipment. In the last few years, smuggling of marijuana to Iceland has been declining as it has increasingly been grown domestically. Recently the Icelandic police authorities

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have been very active in infiltrating and stopping these domestic operations and Commissioner Eiriksson noted that the presence of marijuana in the confiscated drugs highlighted the police's success; i.e., dealers are resorting to smuggling marijuana into the country rather than relying on domestic production.

16. (SBU) Comment: Beyond the successful work by a variety of law enforcement agencies, the cooperation between the Iceland Defense Agency and the Coast Guard is remarkable as they have been fighting a bitter duel in the press over budget and areas of responsibility. Post is encouraged by these efforts and hopes the coordination can continue regardless of the outcome over budget issues. We also anticipate a rise in seizures as the summer travel season gets underway, particularly with the resumption of ferry service between eastern Iceland, Norway, Denmark, and the Faroes.

van Voorst